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**SUNBURN NOT THE ONLY BURN TO WATCH OUT FOR THIS SUMMER**

A spate of gas barbecue explosions last summer is a reminder to take care while enjoying the holiday season, AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today.

“Barbecues are a great opportunity to socialise and share food with family and friends, and maybe play a game of cricket or go for a swim,” Dr Gannon said.

“But, unfortunately, every year children and adults suffer serious burns as a result of unattended, poorly maintained, or poorly positioned barbecues.

“Last New Year’s Eve, two women were seriously burned when a gas bottle exploded at a Sydney home, and a few days later three people, including a six-year-old girl, suffered burns in a similar accident.

“In March, a family of five was rushed to hospital after a gas barbecue exploded at a picnic area in the New South Wales Southern Highlands.

“It’s important to regularly maintain and clean your barbecue and other outdoor cooking equipment, including pizza ovens and spit roasters, and check the gas bottle and hose for any leaks.

“Leaking gas bottles or hoses can explode, built-up fat and grease can provide fuel for a fire, and accelerants should never be used to start or feed a fire.”

Barbecues and other cooking equipment should be a safe distance from the house or apartment, and in a well-ventilated space, away from any potentially flammable objects such as Christmas decorations.

A fire extinguisher and fire blanket should be at hand, and it is important that people know how to use the extinguisher before the need arises.

Weather warnings and fire danger ratings should be checked, and plans reconsidered on particularly hot or windy days.

“If someone does sustain a burn, it is important to stay calm and start first aid immediately,” Dr Gannon said.

“Remove clothing and jewellery from the burn area, and run cool water over the burn for 20 minutes. Cover the burn area with clean cloth or cling wrap, and seek medical attention immediately.”

**Background**

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) figures show that burns accounted for 8505 hospital admissions in 2015-16.
- Burns patients often require multiple admissions for continuing treatment.
- In 2013-14, twice as many men as women were admitted to hospital for burn injuries, and the largest proportion of cases was among people aged 25-44 years (30 per cent), followed by children aged under 10 years (22 per cent).

- The Fiona Wood Foundation says that 200,000 Australians suffer a burn injury each year, at an estimated economic cost of more than \$150 million each year.
  - A 24-hour period of admission for specialist burn care costs \$2000.
  - The majority of burns happen in the home, many of them in the kitchen.
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